तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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Paramahamsa Sri Gour Kishore Das Babaji

From the Teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

You'll be surprised to know that my spiritual master's spiritual master was illiterate. And my spiritual master was the greatest learned scholar of his age. My grand-spiritual master's name was Gour Kishore Das Babaji Maharaja. He was illiterate, but when you asked him some intricate question of spiritual significance, he would answer you immediately and very nicely. That is realization.

— Lecture in Los Angeles. 12 January 1968.

Gour Kishore Das Babaji remained *niṣkiñcana* [possessionless]. His disciple, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, also remained *niṣkiñcana.* Although he possessed so many temples, nothing was for his personal pleasure. It was all for Krishna.

One may question, "Why was your Guru Maharaja sitting on the ground in a municipal lavatory?" Because he did not want anyone to disturb him. So many people would come to him for *darśana* [visiting] and *āśīrvāda* [blessings], and he did not like it. He did not like to be disturbed by this *āśīrvāda*. [He thought:] "They will not take any spiritual instruction. They are thinking that, 'Here is a saintly person, and he'll bless me that my one thousand rupees will become ten thousand.'"

Gour Kishore Das Babaji Maharaja did not like this botheration. He was sitting by the side of a municipal lavatory so that, "These rascals will not come here because of the bad smell. They will not disturb me."

Maharaja Mahindranandi organized a *saṅkīrtana* festival. He came to Gour Kishore Das Babaji Maharaja to invite him. After many requests, Gour Kishore Das Babaji Maharaja said, "Maharaja, you have many tenants. You are Maharaja. Why are you are trying to make me your tenant? As your tenants carry out your orders, so you also want me to do."

"No, sir, no. You are my lord. Whatever you say, I shall carry it out."

"Will you carry out?"

"Why not?"

Gour Kishore said, "Don't go home. Sit down here. Chant Hare Krishna." He fled away. So

next column ☞

Gour Kishore Das Babaji was also very humorous. He said, "If you are so obedient, then I ask you, 'Don't go home. Better give up your dress and chant Hare Krishna here.'"

— Lecture in Mayapur. 6 October 1974.

My Guru Maharaja was a very great scholar, yet his Guru Maharaja, from a literary point of view, could not even sign his name, "Gour Kishore Das Babaji Maharaja". Bhaktivinoda Thakur asked Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur to accept Gour Kishore Das Babaji Maharaja as his spiritual master: "You go and take your initiation from Gour Kishore Das Babaji Maharaja." He [Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati] thought, "I am a great scholar, and I am the son of Bhaktivinoda Thakur, a magistrate and great *vaiṣṇava*. He [Gour Kishore Das Babaji] will be very much pleased to accept me." Of course, he was very much pleased. But in the beginning he refused [to accept Srila Bhaktisiddhanta]. Of course, that was only a show. Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati was not proud. He acted just to teach us. Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati explained, "I was a little proud. So I was thrice refused by my Guru Maharaja," although he was his only disciple. So scholarship is not a qualification for becoming a devotee. That is Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teaching. Scholarship may help, but it is not necessary. The real necessity is that one should be humble and meek and follow the instruction of the spiritual master. This is real qualification.

— Lecture in Vrindavan. 13 March 1974.

Thakur Bhaktivinode was not the official spiritual master of Gour Kisora Das Babaji Maharaja. Gour Kisora Das Babaji Maharaja was already in the renounced order, *paramahaṁsa*. But Thakur Bhaktivinode, even while he was playing the part of a householder, was treated by Gour Kisora Das Babaji Maharaja as preceptor, on account of his highly elevated spiritual understanding. The spiritual master is divided into two parts, *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru*. Officially, Bhaktivinode Thakur was like the *śikṣā-guru* of Gour Kisora Das Babaji Maharaja.

— Letter to Dayananda Das. 1 May 1969.

Excerpts from the Life of Srila Gour Kishore Das Babaji

Divine Madness

Although he wore his begging bowl as a hat, did his worship in an outhouse, and would beat with an umbrella *vaiṣṇavas* who wanted initiation from him, he was greatly respected by the *vaiṣṇava* community for his detachment and devotion. He spent thirty years in a state of intense love for Krishna, roaming about the various groves of the heavenly Vrindavan as a confidante of Sri Radha. He became well known as a perfected renunciant (*siddha bābāji*) and liberated soul (*paramahaṁsa*) in Vraja and Nabadwip.

He wandered for many years through the villages in Vrindavan, continuously worshiping Krishna in the mood of *rāgānuga bhajan* (spontaneous devotional love).

In the year 1894, Jagannath Das Baba ordered him to leave Vraja and go to Bengal. He lived in Nabadwip from that year until his death. His behavior was considered unusual in Nabadwip. He would beg dry foods from householders and offer it as ritual food to Bhagavan. He would cook in used and rejected clay pots and would cover himself with the clothing of corpses left on the banks of the Ganges. He ignored the opinion of others (who felt this behavior to be impure) and would use rejected and unwanted things. Sometimes he would wear a rosary of *tulasī* beads around his neck or have it in his hands for counting the holy name; at other times he would use a rosary (*mālā*) made of torn cloth with knots. He often roamed about naked or with his loincloth half untied.

In his ecstatic moods (*bhāvas*), distasteful foods became delicious to him. He would eat raw rice or other grains soaked in water or in Ganges mud. Srimati Lalita Didi of Radharamanbagh witnessed him at worship:

"One day he picked up an unripe eggplant from the market and sat down at the base of a *jhao* tree at Baganbari. He cut the eggplant into pieces and dipped them into Ganges water and put a *tulasī* leaf on them. He offered them to his *iṣṭa-devatā* [personal deity] and sang a song of offering: "*bhaja patita uddharaṇa, śrī gaura hari*." ["I worship the deliverer of the fallen, Gaura Hari."] He then said, "I don't know the right

method of cooking this, but please eat a little of this food." As soon as he said this his voice became choked, and his body turned bright red and began to swell, while tears flowed from his eyes in streams, soaking his face and chest. Seeing these signs of love, Lalita-didi was amazed. When the *bhāva* subsided nearly an hour later, he again sang a song. Putting Sri Gaura to sleep, he ate the unripe eggplant. His faced showed expressions of great pleasure and happiness, more intense than one would make if tasting *pañcāmṛta* (nectar)."

He would roam around Nabadwip with an iron pot, begging for food. Often he wore the pot on his head. He went along the road saying, "*Jaya Rādhe*!" and the local people thought he acted like a madman. Little boys would run along behind him, and he would play with them: "When he saw a boy who was dark, he would think of him as Krishna, and the fair boy he thought of as Gaura. When the children would touch him, he would say, 'Look Ma Yasoda, your Gopal has punched me!' or "Look Ma Saci, your Gaura is making a face at me!"

— *The Madness of the Saints* by Professor June McDaniel. University of Chicago. Chicago. 1989.

Aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā

A so-called Goswami approached Srila Babaji Maharaja to learn the intimate pastimes of the Lord called *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* (pastimes pertaining to eight times of the day). The first time he came, Srila Babaji Maharaja told him, "Just now I don't have any leisure time. When I find the opportunity, I will explain it to you." As many times as the so-called Goswami came, he received the same answer. Finally, the Goswami became disappointed and stopped coming. Some time later, the *paramahaṁsa* remarked, "A person who becomes distressed at the loss of a useless coin cannot possibly learn the most intimate pastimes of the Lord. Just by reading a book about the *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, real understanding will not develop. One may theoretically understand it, but where will his spiritual body [for assisting the Lord in such pastimes] come from? The attempt to reveal the Lord's pastimes in ordinary literature has created havoc. When such things are written in ordinary books, such literature simply adds to a rubbish pile, which is already heaped high. Everyone is building a high wooden platform, two stories high. Then, after climbing to the top of the platform, they simply pass stool. So many people come to see me, but none of them are genuine. Before they can understand *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, they will have to give up bad association and continuously chant the holy name in the association of devotees. If they attempt to whimsically perform solitary worship, they will be snared by the illusory energy. The name, form, quality and pastimes of the Lord are manifested within the association of the devotees. Wretched persons who do not have full faith in the chanting of the holy name are creating an inauspicious situation for themselves by separately attempting to understand such things. Their attempt to worship the Lord is undertaken without proper intelligence." ❁

— Page 48-52 of *Babaji Maharaja — "Two Beyond Duality"* by Sri Karnamrita Das. New Jaipur Press. Washington MS, USA. 1990.

Unlawful Imitation and Wickedness

There was no space in the latrine to accommodate more than one person. Babaji Maharaja used to bolt the door from the inside and chant the holy name of the Lord. Adjoining the privy was a dilapidated chamber. A man named Madhu moved into that room, had the roof repaired with tin, and began to chant in imitation of Babaji Maharaja. One day, Babaji Maharaja called out to him, saying, "What are you doing and what are you contemplating in that room with the door closed? What are you thinking about in your secluded state? He who does not chant the holy name of Hari in the association of devotees, free from offense, is not in a position to see anything but the four walls of a room. Are you seeing the surroundings? Are you thinking about desirable women, fame or material gain? If you remain in that room, then different kinds of rubbish thoughts will assail you."

Srila Gour Kishore, although physically blind, then demonstrated his capacity for seeing by disclosing Madhu's hypocrisy. He informed the hypocrite that he was cognizant of all of his "secret" acts: how he had stolen the money and food which was left for Babaji Maharaja by others, and how he had gone to various places in Nabadwip to

indulge in illicit intercourse with women. Eventually, this imitator became the victim of a serious disease. He became so ill that after a few days his friends had to come and carry him away to his house. It has thus been demonstrated how, as a result of offenses committed by the imitation of a *mahā-bhāgavata*, one eventually falls down. He taught how worldly people, under the pretense of religious activities, experience only the seeming pleasure of sense gratification, which is compared to living in stool. Srila Babaji Maharaja displayed these pastimes with a view to instructing his followers.

— Page 52 of *Babaji Maharaja — "Two Beyond Duality"* by Sri Karnamrita Das. New Jaipur Press. Washington MS, USA. 1990.

Gour Kishore and Siddha Pranali

Once Sri Narendra Kumar Sen of Agartala came to Babaji Maharaja and begged for *siddha-praṇālī* (revelation of one's eternal identity in the spiritual world). Srila Babaji Maharaja replied, "One cannot know the Supreme Lord through imagination. When devotees sincerely chant *hari-nāma*, gradually the Lord reveals His real identity to them through the syllables of the holy name. At that time the devotees also come to know their own identities, and their favorite service also becomes manifest in their heart." ☸

— Page 55 of *Prabhupada Sarasvati Thakur*. Mandala Publishing Group. Eugene, Oregon, USA. 1997.

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Essential Instructions of Srila Gour Kishore Das Babaji

1) For one who is truly doing *hari-bhajan*, only *hari-bhajan* is favorable. Other than this activity, all other types of services and religious activities become the cause of material bondage.
2) For one who is trying to perform solitary worship, *nirjana-bhajana*, if there is an absence of hearing and chanting *hari-kathā*, or an absence of *sādhu-saṅga*, then the illusory energy *māyā* attacks them with greater strength.
3) That *sādhu* who drives out the witch of *māyā* by the harsh words of truth is a real *sādhu* and our best friend.
4) If one desires to perform *hari-bhajan*, one must give up association of materialistic persons, *asat-saṅga*.
5) Tolerating many difficulties, one should always remain with pure association, *sat-saṅga*, and always maintain hearing and chanting. By this, one's service to the holy name of Lord Hari will always be protected.
6) The amount of one's *hari-bhajan* cannot be calculated by the approval of common people. If duplicity has entered into one's *hari-bhajan*, then one will make an external pretense of great renunciation and detachment, as well as a show of devotion and devotional activities. Such behavior is not genuine detachment or *bhāva-bhakti*.
7) So long as the consideration that one's body belongs to oneself, *dehātma-bodha*, is present, then there is no question of surrender and no chance of getting mercy from Lord Hari. One's *dehātma-bodha* is expanded by attachment to women, children, etc. ☸

— Translated by Sri Pradosh Sahoo from *Śri Upadeśāmṛta*, edited by H.H. Bhakti Ranjan Sagar Maharaja. Bengali. Published by Saraswat Gaudiya Asan. Kolkata. 1992.